

Veteran's Name: DAN KNIGHT

Interview Date: November 9, 2011

Transcriber: Tracy A. Bennett, RPR, CRR

Transcription Date: November 9, 2011

[Tape begins.]

BOB FUHRMAN: This is Bob Fuhrman, the Executive Director of the Richard I. Bong Veteran's Historical Center. We're prepared to conduct an oral history with Dan Knight. Before we begin, I would like everyone in the room to introduce themselves and then we'll continue on with the interview.

DAN KNIGHT: My name is Dan Knight.

ERIN CURTIS: My name is Erin Curtis, and I'm a history intern.

TRACY BENNETT: My name is Tracy Bennett and I'm the court reporter taking down the oral history.

Q: Thank you very much.

Today is Wednesday, November 9th, 2011, and Dan Knight is our interview subject. He is a Vietnam-era Navy veteran.

Dan, can you tell me a little bit about yourself, starting out with when and where you were born?

A: I was born in Chicago in -- on July 20th, 1947. I grew up in the south side of Chicago, in the South Shore neighborhood and I entered the service in 1965 at the age of 18.

Q: Directly out of high school?

A: Yes.

Q: And where did you go to high school?

A: I went to, mainly, high school was Mendel Catholic High School in Chicago.

Q: Mendel?

A: Mendel, M-E-N-D-E-L.

Q: Thank you. What led you to join the Navy upon completion of high school?

A: Well, during the summertime, I turned 18, and that was the beginning of the Vietnam War and I did not want to go to Vietnam, so I enlisted in the Navy and thought I would be someplace else, but, unfortunately...

Q: Didn't quite work out that way?

A: No.

Q: Okay. But, obviously, you had to start out with boot camp and where did you go to boot camp?

A: I went to boot camp in San Diego. I went in the Navy in November of '65, and I did not want to leave -- well, I did not want to be in Chicago during the wintertime, so I chose San Diego.

Q: You were given the option, then? You could have picked Great Lakes or San Diego?

A: Correct.

Q: I didn't -- I didn't realize you had that option at that time.

A: Yep.

Q: Okay. So you went to San Diego for boot camp. And could you describe boot camp in 1965, what kind of memories do you have of that?

A: Ah, that's so long ago. All I remember is it was a lot of classes, a lot of marching and a lot of exercise.

Q: What kind of classes did you have as a boot?

A: We had seamanship, how to tie ropes, survivor -- survival, firefighting. We also had small arms training. We fired the M-1 rifle in [inaudible]. I got to shoot the BAR and the Thompson also.

Q: Your training then is really somewhat generalist --

A: Yes.

Q: -- but there is an aspect of it that seems to be slated towards possible shipboard duty, talking about firefighting training and what have you. Had you had any type of experience growing up in Chicago with ships or boats of any type?

A: Ah, not really. I had a couple friends that -- their fathers were firefighters, so I got to see them work a few times.

Q: So that aspect was something you at least had some exposure to before?

A: Yes.

Q: And, of course, firefighting is critical on shipboard?

A: Exactly. Either you fight it or you swim.

Q: Okay. How long was your boot camp?

A: My boot camp was about 13 weeks long.

Q: Did you have a chance to communicate with the family a lot during that time period or was it work, work, work, move, move, move all the time?

A: Work, work, work. And towards the end we got to call home every -- about once a week and towards the end, we -- my last

week of boot camp, we kind of called home quite a bit and let them know we were on our way, so they won't expect us, you know.

Q: Um-hum. Just to come back to this -- since we're talking about the family aspect of things -- are you oldest? The youngest? Where are you in the sibling run?

A: I am the oldest.

Q: You are the oldest.

A: I have a brother and two sisters.

Q: So you would be the first one away from home. Were your mom and dad a little concerned?

A: Well, my mom passed away in '64.

Q: Oh, I see.

A: And my dad he was not too thrilled about me going in the service, because, um, since he was a World War II veteran, he did not want me to go into the military. He wanted me to go to school.

Q: What service was he in?

A: He was in the Army. He was in the European Theatre.

Q: Did he see combat?

A: Yeah, he did see combat. In fact, he went to the -- he went up north. He was not in Normandy, but he was -- went to the northern route.

Q: Okay.

A: Through Belgium and Holland.

Q: So saw some hard campaigning there?

A: Yeah.

Q: And that -- would you assume is that what kind of colored his thought that he would rather not see you go into the service?

A: Yeah, because, initially, I went to the -- I wanted to go into the Army, because it was a two-year enlistment and chances are, at that time, I would go to Germany. But when I was leaving for -- to take the entry exam for the military, my dad called the recruiter and told him not to accept me.

Q: Really?

A: So...

Q: Did that cause some friction between you and your dad?

A: Yes, it did. I turned around and went to the Navy.

Q: I see. So you go out to San Diego and do 13 weeks of boot camp. And then they allow you to go home before your next assignment?

A: We had a two-week boot leave. I came home, spent two weeks at home. And then I went to my first ship, which is the USS Oglethorpe. It was an Attack Cargo Ship, stationed out of Norfolk, Virginia.

Q: Just making a note of that. So the Oglethorpe, stationed out of Norfolk, was your first ship. And what were you assigned to for your first shipboard duty?

A: Well, initially, I was assigned to the Boat Group Tech Division. The 3rd Division which is the Boat Group.

Q: When you say "Boat Group," we're talking about the actual

landing craft --

A: Landing craft.

Q: -- that would be used by the Oglethorpe to transport Marines or Army personnel from the ship --

A: To shore.

Q: -- to the land?

Okay. So you are with the Boat Group. What kind of duties did you have with the Boat Group?

A: I was a bow hook. I was not the coxswain or the engineer, it's called bow hook.

Q: Was it a three-man crew?

A: It was a three-man crew. Yeah, there's the coxswain in the boat, the bow hook and the -- and the engineer.

Q: Okay. To give us an idea, how many landing craft did the Oglethorpe carry, approximately?

A: We had four mech boats, two salvage boats, there were LCM-5's and salvage boats were LCM-3's, I believe it was. We had LCB-4, LCVP's and we had the captain's gig and the personnel carrier, personnel boat, LCVL.

Q: So the Boat Division actually is not just an important part of the ship's crew, but it's a fairly -- not terribly large, but, I mean, there's some specialized?

A: It was specialized. It was an attack cargo ship.

Q: Um-hum.

A: We carried about 90 Marines and their equipment. Anything

from trucks and buffaloes, border tanks --

Q: Um-hum.

A: -- and their equipment.

Q: Just for the purposes of the interview, LCVP, Landing Craft Vehicle Personnel?

A: Right.

Q: And LCM?

A: LCM, Landing Craft Mechanized.

Q: Mechanized. And so the LCVP's would be for the Marines?

A: Well, the LCVP's was like a cabin cruiser for the command.

Q: Okay. And so the main part of the landing for the Marines and their equipment would be the LCM's?

A: LCM's and LCVP's.

Q: Very good.

Was the Oglethorpe a World War II era vessel?

A: Yes, it was. It was commissioned in 1943. It was in the Pacific Theatre and, according to what I can remember, it did see a lot of action against the Japanese.

Q: So you joined the Oglethorpe in Norfolk?

A: Right.

Q: How long were you with her?

A: I was with her for about two years. Then we went through a yard period and then we went down to Guantanamo Bay for the shakedown cruise for the -- for the yard period. And that's when I got orders to go to Vietnam.

Q: So two years with her basically on the East Coast --

A: Right.

Q: -- for the most part. And that takes us to 1967?

A: Correct.

Q: Okay. During your time with the Oglethorpe, were you always in the Boat Division?

A: No. I was transferred after six months to the signal bridge.

Q: What were those duties like?

A: Um, it's pretty -- pretty good duty. I was up in the signal bridge all the time. My duties was [sic] flashing light, semaphore and signal flags.

Q: Was that specialized training that you received after joining the Oglethorpe or had you had background in that type of signals in boot?

A: No. It was an on-the-job training and I learned everything that -- except for the Morse Code, because I knew Morse Code before when I was in the Scouts.

Q: Boy Scouts? Okay.

A: So, yeah.

Q: Good. So what progression of rank had you gone through over the two years on the Oglethorpe?

A: I went from Seaman Apprentice to 3rd Class - Petty Officer.

Q: Your orders come through to leave the Oglethorpe and your next destination is Vietnam. Was it standard at that time for

you to do two years at a posting and then move on?

A: Well, they needed boat crews over in Vietnam, so since I was part of a Boat Group, we were down doing some boat operations in Guantanamo Bay. And so it was, okay, you, you, you and you are going overseas.

Q: So you were detached while you are away from Norfolk?

A: Right. We were down in Guantanamo Bay and we were doing some training down in Guantanamo Bay and they said -- you know, they selected a few people to go over there and man the boat crews and the boats over there.

Q: Did you leave the air then from Guantanamo Bay Air Station or how did you get to Vietnam in your next posting?

A: I left Guantanamo Bay, flew up to Norfolk, Virginia, then went through Chicago for -- you know, to say good-bye to the family and flew to Travers Air Force Base and took a C-130 over to Saigon.

Q: How long did you get a chance to stay with the family in Chicago?

A: Two weeks. Two weeks.

Q: Given your father's feelings against you joining the military initially --

A: He was upset.

Q: Did you have a lot of discussions about that?

A: No. I don't remember.

Q: But you knew he was upset?

A: Yeah.

Q: What about the rest of your family, your siblings?

A: Ah, my sisters were too young to understand. My brother, he was a typical teenager, he didn't care.

Q: So you leave Chicago and you head out to Saigon. What's your first assignment when you get there -- or what's your first impression?

A: When we landed in Saigon, the plane did not stop. We had to um, um, jump off the plane as it was taxiing, because we were under a mortar attack. And it goes, duck and roll and go to the trenches at the side of the taxiways.

Q: So you and your seabag basically jumped into Vietnam, off of a taxiing aircraft?

A: Right. Actually, I don't have my -- I didn't have my seabag.

Q: Oh, so just you alone?

A: Yeah. I did not know where my seabag went.

Q: That's interesting. What was your first impression, then, I mean, to come into this situation --

A: Holy shit.

Q: I can imagine. I can imagine.

How long did the mortar attack last? What -- what kind of feelings did you have during it, do you recall?

A: I don't recall, but I was scared, scared shitless, excuse my --

Q: That's okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: Put it out there the way you feel about it.

So the mortar attack eventually ends and you get out of this trench and what's the first thing they have you do from there?

A: Well, we had to, um, go to receiving -- the receiving unit.

Q: Um-hum.

A: And they trained -- they gave us basic instructions and they gave us where we were supposed to be going, our boats, and what we were going to be doing over there. And I was attached to the river patrol boats.

Q: What's known as the Brown Water Navy?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you join them right away and assign onto a boat crew?

A: About a week later. I had to go through initial training over there, you know, see what I know and so forth, and eventually I got to be assigned to a boat.

Q: And what body of water did that boat operate on?

A: We operated on the inland waterways, up the delta and tributaries, and a few times we were off the coast of -- off the coast of Vietnam.

Q: Can you describe the boat that you were assigned to: Type, crew size, armament, mission?

A: Basically, we had a six-man crew. We carried a twin -- carried 50-caliber machine guns. A couple boats we had carried

M-60's. They also carried -- a couple boats had 40-millimeter anti-aircraft guns, which they used to, you know, do the -- return fire of the VC. And one boat we had had a couple flamethrowers.

Q: So your boat is actually part of a flotilla?

A: Yes.

Q: How large was the flotilla?

A: We had roughly 20 boats in our group.

Q: All roughly about the same size?

A: Same size.

Q: Six-man crew?

A: Right.

Q: Were they LCM's or some other type?

A: It was a mixture of LCM's, swift boats, we had a couple converted cabin cruisers, and that's about it.

Q: Describe a typical day's operations. What would you be sent to do, how many boats to do it?

A: We were tasked with one or two boats going out to do some patrol, search and destroy. So -- so we can capture and whatever, everything to do was geared to get the enemy, you know.

Q: Hard to identify the enemy in Vietnam at times?

A: Very hard, because we did not know who our enemy was.

Q: Dressed as civilians?

A: Yep, yes.

Q: Might not know until they take action against you?

A: Right. I've seen men, women and children attack us and
[crying] --

Q: It's okay, Dan.

A: [Crying.] It was hard to deal with.

Q: It must have been a terribly stressful environment not knowing where a threat was coming from and could come at anytime. How did you and your crew mates deal with that? Did you tear things up when you were off duty and off the water to try to put those things behind you that way?

A: We did have our -- our -- we did have our beer, we did have our drinks, some guys had their dope.

Q: Um-hum.

A: But I just stuck with the liquor.

Q: How was -- is your -- is your time there structured? Is it a few days out on patrol and then come back? Or is it every day to go out and come back to a relatively safe area?

A: Ah, longest we had been out was, I would say, a week. And then come back for a couple days and go back out again for maybe a day or two and back and forth.

Q: How many boats in the flotilla would go out on an operation like that?

A: Usually we had one or two boats go out.

Q: So you do have some support. But going out for a week with a six-man crew, what were your watches like, four on four off?

A: We were on 24.

Q: 24.

A: Yep.

Q: It must have been somewhat exhausting?

A: Yeah.

Q: Not just the stress and being up all the time, but what was the weather like?

A: Hot and humid.

Q: So that had a toll you were paying as well, I imagine?

A: Yeah.

Q: How long were you in Vietnam?

A: I was there -- I was only there for nine months.

Q: So you go there --

A: I got wounded.

Q: In what month did you arrive?

A: I arrived in country in March.

Q: Of '67?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. Thank you.

A: I left in February of '68.

Q: The circumstances that led to you leaving, do you want to talk about that?

A: [Shakes head.]

Q: Okay. We can come back to that later or another night, that's fine.

A: Okay.

Q: But you did leave because of wounds?

A: Yes.

Q: In fact, you were severely wounded?

A: Yes.

Q: Could you briefly just mention the type of wound?

A: Ah, our boat was hit by an RPG and I got a head wound, knocked me out for about three months.

Q: Literally, were wounded and woke up back stateside, correct?

A: Yes.

Q: Where did you wake up? Where were you?

A: I was at the Great Lakes Naval Hospital.

Q: Great Lakes, Illinois, just outside of Chicago?

A: Right.

Q: So near home?

A: Yeah.

Q: How did your family handle all this?

A: [Crying.]

Q: It's okay.

A: [Crying.] When I finally woke up, my dad was staying in the room with me and the only thing he said was, "I told you so." He left the room, never came back.

Q: How much longer were you in the hospital?

A: About two months. [Crying.]

Q: You also received a Silver Star. Do you want to talk about that tonight or would you rather discuss that at some other time?

A: Some other time.

Q: Okay. Do you remember what it was like those couple months in the hospital to have basically lost three months of your life? That must have been very disorienting.

A: It was.

Q: So you would have come back to consciousness about May of 1968?

A: Yes.

Q: And in the hospital then until just July?

A: Yeah.

Q: Three months?

A: Yeah, I was in the hospital for my 21st birthday.

Q: Okay.

A: And then I got out.

Q: Upon discharge from the hospital, were you discharged from the Navy?

A: No, I stayed in on active duty and I went to -- back to another ship.

Q: What ship did you go to?

A: The USS Fremont.

Q: And what kind of ship was the Fremont?

A: It was an Attack Transport. It was kind of the same kind of ship for -- as the Oglethorpe. It was in the Gator Navy.

Q: Okay. And where was that?

A: That was Norfolk also.

Q: So you get a chance to go back to Norfolk?

A: Yep.

Q: Was that a good feeling to get back on active duty and back to a place you were familiar with?

A: Yes.

Q: What type of duty did you have on the Fremont?

A: I had some pretty good duty on the Fremont. I had my days, had my good days. I never --

Q: I imagine this is the soup story?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. So the Fremont is based at Norfolk --

A: Yep.

Q: -- it's an Attack Transport?

A: Yep.

Q: What rank are you by this time?

A: I was a [inaudible] 3rd Class.

Q: Okay. So you are CPO -- a CPO, Chief Petty Officer - 3rd Class.

A: No, Petty Officer.

Q: I'm sorry, Petty Officer -- not CPO, but Petty Officer - 3rd Class?

A: Yep.

Q: And you are on the Fremont and your duty station is?

A: I was up on the signal bridge.

Q: Again, giving signals?

A: Right.

Q: But you have shared with me in the past the story on the mess deck.

A: [Laughing.]

Q: Would you like to share that again?

A: [Laughing.]

Q: [Laughing.]

A: Yeah. This might relieve the pressure of a few minutes ago.

Back at that time I had -- I had shore patrol, I had duty, and I had shore patrol duties. And back, at that time, we had -- we carried our .45's with us. At this time -- this is a Friday afternoon, we had early liberty, so I got my equipment and decided to have lunch before I went out on the patrol. And got a bowl of soup --

Q: [Laughing.] I'm sorry --

A: [Laughing.]

Q: -- I don't mean to make you laugh.

A: There was a cockroach in my soup, so I went and shot it.

Q: On the mess deck?

A: On the mess deck.

Q: On the USS Fremont?

A: Yes.

Q: What port were you in?

A: Norfolk.

Q: So you are in your home port and shooting up the mess deck.

What type of reaction did that generate, Dan?

A: Quite a lot of -- a lot of commotion.

Q: This wasn't a normal occurrence on the mess deck on the Fremont, was it?

A: No.

Q: Any idea what led you to do that?

A: I just didn't want that cockroach in my soup.

Q: Did you still go out on shore patrol?

A: No.

Q: What happened next, please?

A: [Laughing.] I got wrote up, of course. I went to a non-judicial punishment.

Q: So you had a Captain's Mast?

A: Yeah, I had a Captain's Mast.

Q: What happened at the Captain's Mast? What did the Captain say to you?

A: He asked me what happened and the reason why I shot the cockroach. So I told him, "It was in my soup so I wanted to get rid of it."

Q: What was his reaction?

A: The entire proceeding was all laughter, but serious. I was only fined a buck and a half.

Q: And that was the extent of your non-judicial punishment or was there --

A: Oh, there was a confinement. And I was -- I was not -- I

was ordered not to have any meals with the crew.

Q: For a certain set period of time or...

A: Three weeks.

Q: Three weeks?

A: Three weeks.

Q: Did you get a bit of a reputation on the ship after that?

A: Yes.

Q: And you were 21 at this time?

A: Yeah.

Q: So you were feeling your oats a little bit?

A: You might say that.

Q: Did you ever pull shore patrol duty again?

A: No, they would not let me. [Laughing.]

Q: I can imagine.

A: [Laughing.]

Q: After the soup incident, how did your Navy career progress from there?

A: Very, very smoothly. We were on a cruise and I got in trouble again.

Q: Could you explain?

A: We went over to the Mediterranean for a Mediterranean cruise and back, at that time, we had a Russian Minesweeper and a Squadron --

Q: Shadowing?

A: -- shadowing our ships. So having taken Russian in high

school, I decided to practice my Russian.

Q: How did you do that?

A: I called the Russian ship with a flashing light.

Q: What message did you send to them, Dan?

A: I just wanted to say, "Hi."

Q: Did they respond?

A: Yes, they did.

Q: What did they say?

A: "Hi," back. And that was the last of it.

Q: I would imagine your communication with the Russians was noticed?

A: Yes, it was. Next thing you know the Captain, the XO, my Division Officer, my Chief, the Intelligence Officer, and a couple Master at Arms were up on the bridge, wanted to know what was going on.

Q: What was your explanation?

A: This was like at 2:00 in the morning. I was bored and I talked to the other ships and I wanted to talk some more. And since I knew Russian, I called the ship up and -- just to say, "Hi."

Q: What kind of reaction did you get from your superiors?

A: They told me not to do it again.

Q: Were you put on report for that?

A: No.

Q: Dealt with it just immediately with a review?

A: Yeah, yep.

Q: Anything else you would like to share from your time on the Fremont?

A: I'm sure there's other times.

Q: What was it like in the Mediterranean? Did you get a chance to visit some of the ports there?

A: We got -- I had a six-month deployment, so we got to visit quite a few places. We spent Christmas in Naples, Italy; I had a chance to go up to Rome for a tour; we went to Cannes, France; Barcelona and other various ports over there.

Q: What type of mission was the Fremont on during that six months? Strictly exercises?

A: Strictly exercises and a show of -- show of strength.

Q: Show the flag and...

A: Yeah, just typical cruise.

Q: Just to backtrack for one second, it was pretty typical to be shadowed by Russian --

A: Yes.

Q: -- vessels?

A: Yes. We also would have flyovers by the Russian bombers and the Badger bombers and I'm pretty sure there was some Russian subs in the area shadowing us.

Q: So even though you are away from the shooting war in Vietnam, you are really in the Cold War?

A: Right.

Q: In the Mediterranean?

A: Yeah, I was in the Cold War.

Q: So you are six months on the Fremont in the Mediterranean and that comes to an end about when?

A: Let's see, we got back to the States in June -- no, March of '79 [sic] -- ah, '69.

Q: March of 1969?

A: Right.

Q: What happened then?

A: Um, the ship was decommissioned, so I was on the decommissioning crew.

Q: What type of process was that?

A: Sealing the entire ship up and putting it in mothballs and, subsequently, it was scrapped.

Q: But the process of putting it in mothballs, so to speak, is to preserve it --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- in case it's needed at a certain time in the future?

A: Correct.

Q: What type of materials did you use to do that? I've seen pictures of mothballed ships. I know nothing of the process.

A: Well, we had various covers, grease, at the -- I'm not too sure, I don't remember that much.

Q: How long did it take to decommission?

A: It took a few months to decommission.

Q: Interesting. Was the entire crew involved with the decommission process along with some yard workers or was only part of the crew kept on for that?

A: Ah, initially the entire crew was part of the decommissioning, but as time goes by, people got orders and going to other ships and, subsequently, in September of '69, it was totally decommissioned.

Q: What were your next steps after that?

A: Just about that time was my discharge. I had to -- I asked for an early discharge to go to school, so I got an early out in September of '69 to go to school.

Q: So you had a total of four years --

A: Close to four years.

Q: Close to four years in the service?

A: Correct, in that time.

Q: Okay.

A: Then, when I got out, I stayed in the Reserves when I was going to school.

Q: And that would have been a one weekend type a month commitment?

A: Right.

Q: Where did you go to school?

A: Initially I went to Loyola University in Chicago.

Q: Um-hum.

A: And in '72, I was a victim of a drive-by shooting. And the

next day, I said, "To hell with this," I went out to California.

Q: So you left Chicago?

A: I left Chicago and went out to San Diego.

Q: Back where you had gone to boot camp?

A: Right. Because I had some friends out there and was vacationing out there and never went back. I stayed in the Reserves out there. I was going to school and I had a two-year payback, so I had to go back in. And, about that time, I passed the Chief's test and they offered me either -- well, about that time, I got my degree and, by that time, they offered me a commission or being a Warrant Officer, so I took my commission.

Q: Before we go into that, where did you go to school out in San Diego?

A: I went to the University of San Diego.

Q: And what did you study?

A: I signed on as accounting, I ended up geophysics.

Q: Interesting. So you finished that and you still had, you said, a two-year commitment to the Navy?

A: Correct.

Q: And you decide to go the commissioned route?

A: Yes.

Q: Tell us about that.

A: Well, I was -- maybe I had two years, but I did my two years and I decided to stay in, because I had really good duty.

Q: What were you doing?

A: I had a very unique assignment. I was attached to a research ship that was playing instruments on the ocean floor.

Q: Is that something you can talk about or is that classified?

A: Ah, it was classified at that time, but, um, I'm really not too sure how the years --

Q: How long the classification...

A: Right.

Q: In a very general way, could you say what type of instruments they were?

A: All I can say is they were seismology equipment --

Q: Okay.

A: -- on the ocean floor.

Q: Okay. You are an officer then?

A: Yes.

Q: What was that like compared to being an enlisted man?

A: I had the very unique opportunity, because I could understand what the enlisted man was going through, I was very well-respected as an officer, because I was enlisted. We were called Mustangs so...

Q: That is an enlisted man who rises to a commissioned rank --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- is a Mustang?

A: So I was very well-respected and I was not very well-respected from the academy people.

Q: The trade school --

A: Yes.

Q: -- as they call it in the Navy, Annapolis.

I did forget to ask, what is the name of the ship you were on at this time?

A: Ah, I was on the USS Discovery, it's a USNS.

Q: A USNS?

A: Right. It's a -- a Navy ship, but it was a civilian ship under Navy contract.

Q: So, actually, civilians also on board?

A: Yes.

Q: That must have been interesting cooperation?

A: Yes, it was, but we were all doing the same thing. I was doing my seismology thing slash other collateral duties.

Q: Um-hum.

A: And we got along pretty good.

Q: But to go back a moment, you said that as a Mustang you didn't necessarily get along very well with the academy officers. Anything along that line you would like to share?

A: The -- all I got to say about that is they have a very high ego and they made their presence known, saying, "We -- we know what we're talking about, so listen to us."

Q: So there's a real social strata in their minds?

A: Correct, very large ego.

Q: Very interesting.

So you are two years on this -- on the Discovery?

A: I spent --

Q: Or you had two years as an officer you had to pay back?

A: I had two years payback.

Q: Payback.

A: But I had -- I stayed on there until '82, from '74 to '82. And, in the interim, I had various other collateral duties. I had to go to do, ah, research in Russia, involving some earthquakes in the vicinity. And I cannot really discuss that because it's, um...

Q: Still classified or sensitive?

A: It's sensitive, but it's -- a lot of heads roll.

Q: So a chance to go to Russia. This is after the period -- what was the term, Glasnost?

A: Glasnost.

Q: Yes. So there was the reduction of barriers between the east and west for a certain -- or that was what was --

A: Well, I did have a Russian person attached to me.

Q: All the time?

A: All the time.

Q: And how long were you in Russia with that project?

A: Six weeks.

Q: Can you say what area of Russia you were in or is that part of the sensitive?

A: That's part of the sensitive.

Q: Okay. Understood.

A: It's Chernobyl.

Q: We can extract that.

After college, you are in the Navy up until 1982 then?

A: Um-hum.

Q: And you decide to retire?

A: No, we had a -- I was involved in an incident and I was kind of changed duties.

Q: Ah-huh.

A: I went from the being a Science Officer to a Supply Officer, because I did have a secondary degree in accounting, so...

Q: How did you feel about that change?

A: I was kind of relieved and kind of -- I was kind of relieved, because it was that much -- there was a lot of stress to manage that.

Q: Because of the sensitive nature of some of the projects or?

A: No, I think it's the activity level.

Q: Oh.

A: But being a supply officer, I was -- I was attached to the disbursement aspect of supply, which is the payroll.

Q: And where was that?

A: Ah, let's see, I started off, um -- let's see, in '82, I went to the USS Samuel Gompers, which is a Destroyer Repair Ship or Destroyer Tender. And, then, from there, I went to Pearl Harbor, from '83 to '87. '87 to '89, I was attached to the Kitty Hawk.

Q: Aircraft Carrier?

A: Aircraft Carrier. And I was the -- after I retired in '91, I was attached to the Navy Finance Center in San Diego, California.

Q: Various postings?

A: Yes.

Q: Very interesting.

When you were Disbursement Officer on the Gompers, the Destroyer Decoy Ship, was that basically the payroll for the entire Destroyer Squadron then?

A: That was just for the ship.

Q: Just for the single ship?

A: Right.

Q: Interesting.

A: But we did have payroll for the other ships that were attached outboard of us at -- like a smaller ship.

Q: Um-hum.

A: Like a Mine Sweeper, we would do their payroll also.

Q: Because they wouldn't have had their own Disbursement Officer.

A: Right.

Q: That's interesting. You don't often think too much about that administrative side of the Navy, but I suppose sailors like to get paid.

A: Yes.

Q: So you must have been a pretty popular officer that way?

A: I was.

Q: You were in Pearl, did you have to do any disbursements while aboard ship overseas?

A: No, I was attached to the base.

Q: Okay. So you didn't have to worry about things like local currency or anything like that?

A: Right.

Q: Okay.

A: Besides Pearl is, you know...

Q: Well -- but I didn't know if, for instance, if you were on a ship that had a foreign port of call --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- and a payday came up, would it be necessary to make some local currency available to the ship before -- ship's crew before shore leave?

A: Ah, it depends on the ship. The ship that I was on, we did not have the opportunity to exchange. They would have to go ashore to change their money.

Q: Interesting. I had never thought about that before. That opened up something very new.

So you finally decide to retire and, again, what year is this?

A: '91.

Q: '91?

A: Yes.

Q: And you are retiring from San Diego?

A: Right.

Q: What do you do then?

A: Well, I was, um -- let's see, I retired in '91, so I lived out there and worked out there until '95, when I sold my condo out there and moved back to Chicago.

Q: What type of work did you do for those years in San Diego?

A: I was doing accounting.

Q: And then you come back to Chicago, back home?

A: Right.

Q: What did you do in Chicago for work?

A: I had done some freelance work and some consultant work. Basically, I would go from -- I would find companies and I would go in there and do some consult work, but then doing -- doing the accounting work.

Q: Um-hum.

A: Like if they were behind on their accounting, you know, paperwork, I would go in there and get them all caught up and then move on to the next.

Q: How long were you doing that in Chicago?

A: About five years. And I decided to totally retire because I was getting tired.

Q: So can you give me a brief overview between those -- at the end of those five years in Chicago and what brings you up here to

the Twin Ports?

A: I had not seen my baby sister for a number of years. So back in 2004, I was down in Chicago and I was in Milwaukee. And she asked me if I -- if I wanted to come here for the holidays. And I said, "Sure." Came up here on November 15th, 2004, never went back. I stayed up here.

Q: And, actually, got involved in the Coast Guard Auxiliary up here?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you want to talk about that a little bit? Was it your Navy experience that led you to want to do that?

A: Yeah, I wanted to get my feet wet again. I met Dave Anderson, who was the Flotilla Commander, at a 4th of July parade. So he found out I was a retired naval officer. So he said, "Why don't you become an auxiliarist?" It took me a year to, you know, think about it. And the next year and the next 4th of July, he was there and I said, "Sign me up." And a year and a half later, I became the Flotilla Commander for the Duluth Auxiliary.

Q: And you are still active with the Auxiliary to the degree you can?

A: To the degree I can.

Q: Okay.

A: With the condition that I have, you know, it's -- I can't do too much.

Q: But active as you can be?

A: Active as I can be.

Q: And you also, of course, volunteer at the Center here?

A: Right.

Q: And you are a member of the American Legion Post?

A: I'm the Public Relations Officer.

Q: That's right, Public Relations Officer.

A: I'm also the Adjutant for the DAV.

Q: Disabled American Vets?

A: I'm the County Adjutant for the American Legion. I'm also on a couple committees for the City of Superior.

Q: So much for a restful retirement.

A: Yep.

Q: Dan, this has been a very enjoyable and inciteful interview tonight. I appreciate you dealing with some time periods that were difficult and maybe we can revisit those in the future, but at your convenience, at your decision. Still very valuable. It's something we've been talking about doing for quite some time.

A: Right.

Q: And we now, of course, do have the soup bowl incident on tape.

A: We can't erase it?

Q: Well, that is certainly a part of your service, though.

A: Yeah.

Q: And --

A: It's in the records.

Q: It is in the records.

Thank you so much. We appreciate it greatly.

A: Thank you for the opportunity for having me relive my experiences. Thanks.

Q: That completes the interview with Dan Knight, November 9, 2011.

[End of tape.]